



FIFO Far in Far out Project:

Rwanda-Youth, Gender Awareness, Reconciliation and Violence Prevention

Report: Training of Youth on Gender Awareness, Reconciliation and Violence Prevention in Gasabo and Kicukiro Districts.

1) Introduction

GER-Rwanda in partnership with CFOR conducted two youth training sessions on 'Gender awareness, Reconciliation and Violence prevention'. The trainings took place in the district of Gasabo, from **31 October -02 November 2022** in the Nduba sector, and in the district of Kicukiro from **14-16 December 2022** in the Gahanga sector. The trainings were facilitated by Mr. SHYIKIRO Gimu Ntayoherwa with Co-facilitators Mrs. MUKARUTESI Clemence (Gasabo) and Mrs. KAMAYIRESE Carine (Kicukiro). Both co-facilitators have a high level of education, and both are survivors of the 1994 Genocide against Tutsi and were trained in different forums of GER-Rwanda and CFOR. Through those forums, they found personal healing and now they are helping others. The trainings were attended and opened by local officials.

A total of **60** people (36 males and 24 females) attended, out of 60 that were expected. **30** (16 males and 14 females) were from Gasabo and **30** (20 males and 10 females) were from the Kicukiro district.

Gasabo

In the district of Gasabo the training was opened by **Mrs. NIBAGWIRE Jeanne**, the Executive Secretary in the Nduba sector. During the official opening, she explained that the Gasabo district is no different than other parts of the country, when it comes to the effects of the 1994 Genocide against Tutsi. But Nduba is unique in that there is a mass grave where people were thrown, starting in 1959. Discussing this kind of history with the youth is of great importance, to help them begin to understand and reconcile with the past. She appreciated GER for teaching and working with youth in the area of peace-building, and to now also bring discussions about gender awareness, including facilitating in-depth dialogue.

Kicukiro

The training was officially opened by the sector leader **Mr. TWIRINGIYIMANA Etienne** in charge of good governance, together with the head police officer and the army officer in charge of the Gahanga sector and the Executive director of GER Rwanda, Mr. Innocent Musore.

He appreciated GER-Rwanda for its great participation in creating a healthy community, free from violence. He added that these trainings are needed as many young people are still living with an imbalance of power, and with systems of inequality that were built by their elders. If these

systems are not broken, the community will keep living with the same patterns of gender inequality. He said, “I believe that after these 3 training days, the young people will be change makers, and we will support them to implement what they have learnt as they go on to teach others.”



The first group photo was taken in the Nduba sector (Gasabo) and the second in the Gahanga sector (Kicukiro) at the end of the training.

The Executive Director opened by sharing the focus of the training, which is gender awareness, reconciliation and prevention of gender-based violence. He said “The reason for bringing this to you is to teach you, and to make you advocates in your communities and encourage you to build a better future, free from injustice and inequalities. We are not here to just talk, but to build you up as agents of change in your communities, and this will only happen if you put what you learn into action and let the change begin with you.”

2) Training structure and take away

2.1. Training details

First, each trainee introduced themselves sharing what they expected to learn from the training. Most of the trainees were very interested to learn more about gender and equality. Some said that they were eager to learn lessons that they can in turn share with other young people when they go back to their communities. One young person shared an important thought, about how gender violence takes place almost everywhere around them, yet they have no idea who to approach and how to stop it. “I am glad that today I will have answers to my unanswered questions.”

The training covered these topics: Gender equality, Gender based violence, ‘Gender box’ (stereotypes of gender roles), the use of power, parent legacy, diversity and rights. As a training methodology, we introduced each topic by asking questions that supported the participation of the trainees — sharing testimonies, listening to testimonies, and group discussions. The sessions were recorded, and the participants were requested to sign consent forms at the beginning which was done freely. The facilitator clearly explained what equality means, providing relevant examples. This helped the trainees to be less confused, and to differentiate gender roles and sex. He reminded the trainees that we receive images in society about what gender means,

through different beliefs, responsibilities and so on, while sex is what indicates you being female or male. Gender roles can be trained and change. This was a very great start to what equality is or isn't. A good number of questions were asked in regard to gender and equality and the facilitator provided answers, clarifications and directions on all of them.

After listening to the input of the trainees, the facilitator introduced the 'gender box', reflecting on stereotypes associated with gender roles. He started by asking questions which revealed how attitudes about gender roles impact people's lives without them being conscious of it. The image that society attributes to gender affects the baby even before it's born, for example when a family gets to know that they are expecting a baby girl, they will tend to use pink while preparing to receive the baby. Societal norms strongly influence our thoughts about gender, both positively and negatively.



These two photos were taken during the training sessions, the first in Gasabo and the second in Kicukiro.

The 'Gender box' discussion reveals societal beliefs that are passed on through generations even before the child is born. For example, when a child fails, they are often seen as their mother's son or daughter, and their success means they are their father's son or daughter. Societal gender norms have limited the potential of children. Being raised in limited gender roles does not allow equality to be put into action. Our beliefs and identity have been formed, and this can make it hard to know when you are being violent to your sister, brother or the community at large, because you are doing what you grew up seeing and believing to be right.

During these trainings, a lot of confusion was resolved, as all of the participants clearly saw the negative impact of not having knowledge about these topics. They shared how stereotypes of gender roles, the 'gender box', brought inequality, imbalance of power and increased discrimination in the community. The discussions also looked at the authority that an individual has — power within, power with, power to, and power over.



These four photos were captured during group discussions. The first 2 were captured in Gasabo and the second 2 in Kicukiro.

2.2. Input from local authorities and co-facilitator

Both the Gasabo/Nduba sector RIB officer, Mrs. Umutoni Clementine, and Clement, the representative of Police in Kicukiro-Gahanga, reminded participants about preventing violence and advocating for those who have been, or are being violated, as a means of seeking justice. “There is a culture that allows abuse to be perpetuated, and which hinders processes of justice for both women and men. I encourage you to speak up and allow justice to be served as the country has granted you laws that set you free.”

Mr. Rutabana, a community unity and reconciliation facilitator, talked with the participants about “I am Rwandan” “Ndi umunyarwanda,” an approach being used to unite Rwandans and end discrimination. He clearly explained how divisions started in Rwanda, and continued until the outbreak of the 1994 Genocide against Tutsi. And how the genocide is continuing to impact the current generation. He emphasized breaking the cycle of conflicts among young people, which are a result of the genocide. As a survivor of the 1994 genocide against Tutsi, he said he was able to forgive his perpetrator, because the perpetrator’s child took a step, and came seeking for forgiveness on behalf of his family. He reminded the participants that forgiveness and reconciliation are possible.



Mrs. Carine, who was co-facilitator during the training in Kicukiro-Gahanga, and a survivor from the same sector, was able to share her testimony about resilience, and how it helps her to forgive, reconcile and develop her life. She focused on how being resilient builds unity, and reminded the young generation that no one should be blamed or blame others about something they didn't do. To her, resilience is the foundation to living peacefully, and building a healthy and developed community.

3) Testimonies or Stories

Claude: My mother died when I was 2 years old. My dad was unable to take care of me and he got married thinking that his wife would support him and raise us. My step-mother denied me education, because when my elder brother went to high school they stole all of his school supplies, and he came home with nothing. My step-mother did not believe this, but claimed that my brother had sold them for money. This became a reason for me to be denied school as she would say, "What was the outcome of your brother being sent to school?" I tried to sneak out and go to school which resulted in me being sent away from home. I became a street child for a few years, then the police found me on the streets. They took me back home, but my step-mother didn't allow me to keep studying. I left home again, and someone offered me a place to stay and act as their gate keeper. I would go to school and stay in that house. Finding something to eat was a problem that I had to struggle with for some time, but later the school started school feeding, and I would always have my lunch at school as a daily meal. The power I had was from within, and it helped me to stay in school regardless of the difficulties that I went through. Finishing school was not easy. People started bullying me, because I was getting older and still in low classes. I never gave this much concern, as I was very determined and wanted to finish my senior six, which I did.

The learning that I take from these trainings will help me in my daily job as a sports teacher to young children. I will teach them about equality and discrimination through play, so that they will not have to deal with the same kind of pain and struggles caused by discrimination and gender-based violence.

Delphine: My dad is a perpetrator of the 1994 genocide against Tutsi. This led to his imprisonment after the genocide. We suffered as children and my mother suffered from the shock for some time. This put a lot of responsibilities on me as the first born. I was determined and wanted to study, but I had no one to provide for me. My school bag was an envelope and I would pick up leftover pieces of soap on the school compound to be able to get some soap to use. Most of my menstrual period days I would sleep and act as if I was sick because I could not afford to buy a pad for myself. Life was very hard until AERG "Association des étudiants rescapés du Genocide," a family foundation formed in the University and schools by students who are survivors, helped me with school. I had to take care for the young ones as well as all the school



requirements. I always questioned God, asking him why he would let me live such a miserable life, enduring such pain for someone else's mistakes. I was unable to smile and speak.

Most of my young life I was unable to speak because of the pain I was carrying inside me. This life broke me, changed me, taught me and left me stronger. Through the different GER trainings I attended, I was able to open up which was my way to healing. And I learnt how I was being violent to my niece, as every time she would do something wrong, I would scare her telling her that I will report her to her uncle, and it changed her whole character from being sociable to shy, and going to bed early. I hadn't realized that I was the one influencing this negative change, until today. I will go home and seek her forgiveness and change my attitude towards her. I will keep helping other people find hope by letting them know that their hurting conditions will come to an end. I really recommended parents to have honest discussions to help their children know the truth and heal.

Claudine, I am 28 years old and I have no idea of who my father is. I grew up in a family that seemed to be functional and it all changed one night when the man I called my father sat me down and told me that he wasn't my father. I tried to ask him why he would tell me this and he replied by saying that he wanted me to know that, and for more information, I should go and ask my mother where my father is. From that day, life became very hard. I was still young and my step-father started being violent to me and my mother. He would come home drunk every night and shout before entering the house, calling out my mother's name, telling her "I don't want to find you and your bastard in my house." Life was not easy for me and my mother, and I ended up leaving home and went to work as a house helper, where I was also treated harshly. I left the place and ended up being pregnant at age 16. I am now married but have always carried an open wound, as it is very hard for me to forgive my stepfather. Through these discussions I have learnt that forgiveness is possible and I believe I have got some courage and will go back and talk to my mother and stepfather, aiming at reconciliation.

Nsengiyumva Francine: I am 27 years old. We were born in a family of perpetrators. We grew up and found out that our uncles participated in the 1994 genocide against Tutsi. My brothers and cousins and I lived in shame, carried a lot of guilt and started living in hiding. My brothers and cousins were sometime unable to stay in school and participate in community get-together activities, because of their shame. They chose to go far from the village and hide. We never wanted to show up in the community, as we blamed ourselves for what our family members had done. I sincerely thank you for thinking about us and bringing us into this open space that allows us to meet and share our stories from different sides. I just learnt today that we aren't supposed to be blamed for our family's wrong doing. Through what I learnt in these trainings with my fellow young people from both sides, we are going to unite our forces, and through sharing our stories we are going to bring other young people that are living in hiding and encourage them to take back their space, as we build a shared future free from discrimination.



4) Conclusion and youth commitments at the end of the training

In conclusion, unconscious assumptions about gender roles, 'the gender box', are extremely problematic. This makes it hard to reconcile, a source of inequalities. When you grow up under gender stereotypes, you live a life of inequality and always find it hard to give people equal rights, diminishing their values and wrongly exercising power. Some types of power are positive, but power can be misused. Mostly the **power over** is dangerous, when people stand in authority over others, and treat them violently. This can be physical violence, where a parent, or members of community uses their power over their children and mistreat them. Societal norms have also been of great disadvantage, when they limit people's potential, denying education, especially to women. And when these gender stereotypes result in denying the right to follow one's dreams, because of one's sex. Acceptance of inequality brought divisions that lead to the 1994 genocide against Tutsi. We all need to come out of these constructs of inequality and normalized violence. We need to start exercising equality, furthering diversity and gender inclusion which will help us to stop being violent to others in the name of society norms. We have to stop contradicting what we believe with what we do. Most of us know better, but still put into practice inequality in social norms. Diversity involves inclusion. Having different stories, colors, and behaviors should not be a source of hatred. We ought to embrace our uniqueness and let it unite us.

It would be hard to share each and everyone's testimony and quote in this report, but everything was captured in the video and young people committed to two things. They agreed to take the lessons learnt from these trainings to other young people in their sectors, providing knowledge about gender equality, and promoting diversity, including helping other young people to find relief from guilt, as a way of eradicating the effects of genocide in their generation. The second commitment was to bring awareness to the use of power in their communities, and to stop violence that comes through misuse of power. They discovered that many young men are unknowingly using their power over young women in an abusive way. They agreed to add gender equality lessons into the activities that they carry out in their communities on unity and reconciliation, as a way of growing a community free from violence.

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Program Facilitator